



Managing A Workforce - Maintain a Positive Atmosphere

David Grusenmeyer
Human Resource Management
Cornell University
PRO-DAIRY

A positive workplace atmosphere does more than anything else to maintain enthusiastic and productive employees. It all starts with a positive attitude on the part of owners and upper level managers.

Attitude is everything. It affects your view of the world and how you react to others, to your work environment and to problems and difficult situations.

Working on a dairy is a tough job. One of your major tasks as a manager is to keep spirits high in order to keep job satisfaction and productivity high. That task needs to start with you. If you come to work complaining about milk price, the state of the dairy industry, weather, or employee performance, what kind of attitude does that project to those around you? How can we expect employees to be excited about coming to work and performing their tasks well if we aren't. No one enjoys coming to a workplace that's filled with a negative atmosphere.

Think about the people around you-- your spouse, children and employees. If one of them comes around in a positive, upbeat mood, how long does it take for someone's bad attitude to kill their positive spirit? Not long. Creating a bad attitude is easy and quick.

If one of those people came around with a bad attitude, how long would it take to turn it around? A long time, probably. Improving a bad or negative attitude is usually a slow, difficult task-- if it can be done at all.

It's easier to maintain a genuinely positive attitude and workplace atmosphere than to change a bad one. Successful producers tell me that to help maintain a positive atmosphere, they celebrate the successes and accomplishments of their employees, even small ones. When the bunker is finally covered, when a milk quality goal is achieved, when a target for no accidents on the job is reached, show your appreciation in a public way. Congratulate an employee in front of co-workers, take the crew out for pizza or order it in, give certificates for dinner for two, let people go home early, one producer took out a small ad in a local newspaper thanking his hard working employees. There are hundreds of ideas that will recognize, motivate and help maintain a positive workplace atmosphere. The key is doing it everyday, not just once in a while when you think of it, or read an article like this to remind you. Start everyday saying the phrase, "I am a positive and appreciative person toward work, employees and co-workers." tape it to the mirror you look in everyday and read it. It may not be true of you today, but with this kind of reminder each day, it soon will be true.



Make a special effort to catch people doing things right-- even small things-- and praise them for their performance. Post inspirational messages around the farm and in break rooms. Most importantly, always walk the positive, motivational talk yourself.